

BETLEY, BALTERLEY & WRINEHILL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 22nd March 2012

PRESENT

Cllrs Seb Daly, Steven Ball, Karen Burton, Simon Harrison, Richard Head, Hayley Kerr, Jo Thomas (from min.67) and Chris Watkin.

IN ATTENDANCE

County Cllr Chapman; Borough Cllr Becket; One member of the public; Gwyn Griffiths (Clerk)

64/12 Apologies for absence were received and accepted as valid reasons for absence under Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972 from Cllrs Berrisford (work), Bettley-Smith (holiday), Hales (work) and Speed (work). An apology for likely late arrival had been received from Borough Cllr Becket (meeting in Stafford).

65/12 Members considered the declaration of interests in agenda items.
There were no interests declared.

66/12 **RESOLVED that subject to the addition of the name of Cllr Seb Daly (who was present) the minutes of the meeting of 26th February 2011 be approved as a true record and be signed by the Chairman.**

[Cllr Thomas joined the meeting at this point]

67/12 The Chairman adjourned the meeting to allow public participation.

68/12 One member of the public was present. As a resident of Common Lane he wished to comment on the suggestion that additional lighting should be provided. Although he and a neighbour felt that additional lighting was a good idea in principle, they felt it was important that the lighting should not be placed in close proximity to properties, especially in view of the potential impact on front bedrooms. Lighting could also result in noise problems if it encouraged people, such as patrons of the nearby public house, to remain in the area longer than might otherwise be the case.

The Chairman explained that there was no specific proposal to provide extra lighting; the Parish Council was merely responding to a suggestion from a local resident. He thanked the resident for expressing his view.

County Cllr Chapman indicated that for financial and contractual reasons the County Council would only provide additional lighting where there was a very strong case identified. It was agreed that the Clerk would establish the County Council's attitude to any lighting being funded (wholly or partly) by the Parish Council.

69/12 The Clerk advised members that a number of members had contacted him seeking an explanation of how the Parish Council's element of the Council Tax had increased despite the Parish quite deliberately freezing its precept. He had explained that the increase was a result of

the Borough Council (as the billing authority) recalculating the Tax Base, based on the number of properties paying Council Tax, without notifying the Parish Council. Ironically, had Newcastle Borough Council advised him of the change to the Tax Base it would have been possible to adjust the Parish Council Budget and Precept to avoid any percentage increase in the Council Tax. He suggested that councillors might wish to offer an explanation to residents through the Parish Magazine, and to take steps to avoid a repetition.

RESOLVED a) that the Clerk draft a brief explanation of the background to the precept and Council Tax to be considered by members prior to insertion in the Parish Magazine;

b) that the Parish Council write to the Borough Council's Head of Finance, expressing concern that the Tax Base was changed without the Parish Council being informed, and seeking assurances that notification would be given of any similar changes in the future.

70/12 County Cllr Chapman advised members that he had nothing specific to report to the meeting.

71/12 Borough Councillor Becket (having joined the meeting) presented his report to the Council.

Balterley Snack Bar. The Borough Council Planning Committee would be considering a report on possible enforcement action against the use at its meeting next Tuesday. Officers were recommending that enforcement action should be taken, their principal concern being the impact on the Green Belt, though Cllr Becket's main concern was the potential impact on the village shop.

Site Allocation Consultation. The Borough Council would shortly be commencing a consultation on the allocation of specific development sites under the planning process. In preparation for this they were currently consulting on the way in which that consultation should be carried out.

Buses. The 84 service was now extended to Hanley, although the journey time was extended by serving Stoke station en route.

A member asked whether there was a Right of Appeal against any enforcement action authorised in respect of the Balterley snack bar. Cllr Becket advised that such a right exists.

72/12 The Clerk advised that there were no planning applications currently to hand, and that no Planning Decision Notices had been received.

73/12 The Clerk formally advised members that the Borough Council Planning Committee was to consider enforcement action against the snack bar in Balterley.

74/12 Members considered progress on initiatives undertaken, or proposed to be undertaken, by the Parish Council.

75/12 Balterley pavements. The Clerk advised that the Council's contractor (R Aspinall) was willing to carry out pavement clearing south of Back Lane at a price well within budget – and that he (the Clerk) had commissioned the work as previously agreed - but was unable to quote for the works opposite Doddlespool Hall because of road safety concerns. He suggested that the County Council's neighbourhood gang would need to be asked to carry out the work.

RESOLVED a) that the Clerk's actions in respect of the works south of Back Lane be endorsed;

b) that the Clerk be asked to establish when the neighbourhood gang would be available to carry out the works north of Back Lane.

76/12 Common Lane lighting. County Cllr Chapman and the local resident were thanked for their earlier comments, but members felt that further views needed to be sought from residents. It also appeared that the prospect of the County Council supporting such work was slim.

77/12 Bus Stops/ Shelters. The paving to access the Crewe-bound stop at Main Road/ East Lawns had now been installed, and some works had been carried out at the Village Hall bus stop.

78/12 Members considered arrangements for an event to mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. It was reported that insurance cover had now been arranged for the various events. A grant of £2,040 had been made by the Bonfire Committee, and the Betley Trust had agreed funding of £329 toward the cost of the commemorative books. The main outstanding cost which had yet to be met was for the provision of toilet facilities for the events.

RESOLVED a) that the Parish Council records its thanks to the Village Hall Committee, the Cricket Club and Mr F Speed for their co-operation in arranging appropriate insurance cover;

b) that the Parish Council allocate a sum of up to £650 to meet the costs incurred by the Working Party in arranging the commemorative events;

c) that the Clerk be authorised to arrange any necessary payments, to take appropriate action to recover VAT where possible, and to record any expenditure which fell under the provisions of Section 137 of the Local Government Act.

79/12 Cllr Burton placed before members a report setting out an application for grant funding under the Community Paths Initiative, to improve a number of local rights of way.

RESOLVED that the report be received and approved for submission to Staffordshire County Council, and that Cllr Burton be authorised to make any necessary adjustments prior to submission.

80/12 A member asked for advice on the status of the Bow Hill Lane BOAT (Byway Open to All Traffic) and whether there was any obligation on either the Parish or County Council to ensure that it was passable. The Clerk indicated that there was no obligation on the Parish Council, but he would check what responsibility might lie with the County Council.

81/12 Members considered arrangements for a potential Community Speed Watch Scheme. A significant number of expressions of interest had been made by potential volunteers, and it was agreed that the interest shown made it worth progressing the matter.

RESOLVED a) that the Clerk register the Council's interest in participating in a Community Speed Watch Scheme with the appropriate bodies;

b) that a decision on funding the purchase of the necessary equipment be taken at the April meeting of the Council.

82/12 The Clerk tabled a letter from Sanctuary Housing, highlighting the difficulty sometimes experienced in finding suitable tenants for their flats in The Butts, Betley where there was currently a vacancy. The Clerk had passed to the Housing Association details of the Parish Magazine as a potential publicity medium, and had also notified all members of the existence of the vacancy. It was understood that a suitable applicant had now been identified.

83/12 The Council considered area issues raised by members.

Betley. Concern was expressed that members of the public were being turned away from the route of one of the footpaths off Common Lane, on the grounds that the route had been diverted. It was unclear whether this was the case, and the most recent details held by the Parish Council suggested that there had been no such diversion, and that the Right of Way was still in place. It was agreed that the Clerk would contact the County Council to establish the position.

Wrinehill. Concern was expressed regarding the Wybunbury fingerpost sign which had slipped and was potentially hazardous to taller pedestrians. The Clerk would report this to the County Council.

Balterley. The Clerk was asked about the condition of the noticeboard on the A531. He explained that the lock was broken and that it had been impossible to open the noticeboard to allow it to be cleaned before being repositioned. He hoped that it would be possible to clean it before the next meeting.

84/12 The Clerk tabled correspondence received since the last meeting.

RESOLVED a) that the question of whether to renew membership of the Staffordshire Parish Councils Association be tabled at the next meeting;
b) that the Village Agents Scheme be tabled for consideration at the next meeting;
c) that the Clerk submit a representation to the Boundary Committee on the lines previously agreed, restating the Council's support for a parliamentary constituency based on the Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme.

85/12 The Clerk submitted to members a list of invoices to hand and payments due, and the Financial and Bank Statements to date.

86/12 **RESOLVED a) that the Council authorises payment of the following:**

S Ball	reimbursement	£ 32.34	951
G Griffiths	salary & expenses	£941.50	952

b) that as only one councillor signatory was present, the Clerk be authorised to sign cheque 951 and to obtain the necessary additional signatures for cheque 952;

b) that the Financial Statement be received;
c) that the Bank Statements be noted, and the reconciliation verified and signed by the Chairman.

87/12 The Clerk also advised councillors of the following financial matters.

Bonds. A leading bank was offering fixed-term bonds which would allow the Council to earn a higher interest rate on funds held, and the Clerk outlined the potential advantages and drawbacks of such investment.

PAYE. The Clerk advised that the Parish Council was now registered as an employer for the purposes of PAYE, though no tax was payable.

Severn Trent Water Authority. The Clerk advised members that as a result of the delay in STWA providing the water supply at the Memorial Garden the Council had received an interest payment of £5.58 on the funds held.

RESOLVED that in view of the potential difficulties in holding bond investments with a banker other than the Council's current bankers no action be taken in respect of the fixed-term bonds offered.

88/12 Members of the Laudy Croft Working Group advised that no maintenance work was currently required. Cllr Head advised that the Clerk had supplied him with information on a potential supplier of wild flower seeds which could be used to enhance the site.

RESOLVED that the matter be considered further at the April meeting.

89/12 Members considered issues relating to council communication, and items to be included in the next issue of the Parish Magazine.

90/12 The Clerk advised members that he was still awaiting a response from the Borough Council regarding permission to carry out works to the conifer on the Memorial Garden grassed area.

91/12 Members considered items for the next Agenda.

RESOLVED that in addition to matters already agreed the next meeting should consider the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, and that a standing item for a report from the Council's representative on the Village Hall Committee should be added to future Agenda.

92/12 Members received a brief report from Cllr Head on recent changes to the Village Hall Management Committee.

93/12 Date of next meeting: Thursday 26th April 2012.

94/12 **RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded during consideration of the following item under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and Section 100A (Schedule 12A Part I 98, 9 & 12) of the Local Government Act 1972, in that it relates to potential contractual arrangements for the supply of goods and services, and/or potential legal proceedings by or against the authority.**

95/12 The Clerk advised members that an acknowledgement of the Parish Council's response in respect of possible contamination and planning conditions at Laudy Croft had been received from the Borough Council, but that no further action was necessary at present.